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Siberian radar facility called most serious ABM violation

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U.S. officials at a bilateral arms control commission requested that the Soviet Union halt construction on a radar facility in Siberia two years ago after intelligence data showed that the radar would violate the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, according to a secret report on Soviet arms violations.

A section of the report on the Soviet radar installation at Krasnoyarsk reveals that the facility fills "the last remaining gap" in Soviet radar coverage against incoming nuclear missiles and is incapable of tracking space launches, which the Soviets had claimed was its purpose.

The analysis appeared in a classified 1984 report titled "Soviet Non-Compliance with Arms Control Agreements." It contradicts Soviet statements that the radar construction does not violate the ABM Treaty because it is intended for tracking space vehicles.

An unclassified version of the report was released last year. A copy of the secret report was obtained by The Washington Times from administration sources.

After the radar was first detected in July 1983, the report reveals, the U.S. representative to the Geneva Standing Consultative Commission on arms control, Gen. Richard Ellis, told his Soviet counterpart, Viktor Starodubov, that the radar installation violated an ABM treaty prohibition on building early warning radars away from a country's borders.

Gen. Ellis, a former commander of the Strategic Air Command, requested the Soviets halt construction on the radar until the dispute could be resolved.

Mr. Starodubov rejected the request and said the U.S. charge was "groundless," the report states. The radar is expected to become operational by 1988.

"We do not build or deploy such radars unless they are in compliance with the ABM Treaty," Mr. Starodubov is quoted as saying.

Gen. Ellis could not be reached for comment on the exchange. An Arms Control and Disarmament Agency

spokesman declined to comment on the SCC discussions, saying all diplomatic exchanges "are highly confidential."

The new radar, located between the central Siberian cities of Krasnoyarsk and Abalakova, has been identified as a large, "phased-array" transmitter with a flat bank of fixed antennas 22 stories tall.

The radar complex is 479 feet long and 288 feet wide. It operates by sending and receiving a spray of

electronic pulses in varying wavelengths, which permits the system to spot metal objects as far away as Alaska.

The location and direction of the radar are believed to indicate that the Soviet Union is preparing a nationwide defense against ballistic missiles.

Krasnoyarsk is more than 450 miles from the closest border, with Mongolia, and the radar is pointed northeast, not directed toward the border.

Experts believe its location would permit the radar, when used with rapid-processing computers, to

coordinate attacks on incoming missile warheads aimed at ICBM fields in the southwestern Soviet Union.

The Reagan administration last year considered the radar to be "almost certainly" a violation of the ABM treaty. In a February report to Congress, the radar was described as a definite ABM violation.

Since the 1984 report, U.S. intelligence has detected other signs of an impending Soviet ABM breakout, including the recent discovery of six large silos at various points throughout the U.S.S.R. They are believed to be sites for the "Flat Twin" pop-up radars currently in use with missile defense interceptors around Moscow, a U.S. intelligence expert said. The Soviets operate the world's only operational ABM system, around Moscow, which is permitted under the treaty.

Besides the radar, the Soviet current testing of ABM interceptors and tactical air defense missiles, the upgrading of surface-to-air missiles,

the rapid reload of Moscow ABMs and ABM component mobility "suggests that the U.S.S.R. may be preparing an ABM defense of its national territory," a 1985 government report on Soviet violations states.

Regarding the 1983 discussions on the Siberian radar, the report states that "the basic objective of the United States in these [SCC] discussions [in Geneva] was to minimize the possibility that Soviet LPAR's [long-range phased array radars] not limited by the ABM Treaty as ABM radars could provide a base for a national ABM defense in circumvention of the provisions of Article I of the Treaty," the report states.

Article I of the ABM treaty binds the United States and Soviet Union to a pledge not to "provide a base" for an anti-missile defense of its territory.

"The discovery of Krasnoyarsk signalled the beginning of the end of ABM Treaty constraints on the Soviets," said the expert, who requested anonymity.

Critics of U.S. arms policy have charged that U.S. complaints about Soviet ABM violations are part of the Reagan administration's plan to negotiate amendments to the treaty that would permit development of the proposed Strategic Defense Initiative, popularly known as "star wars."

Robert Jastrow, a U.S. space science expert, described the Krasnoyarsk radar construction as a "direct, literal" Soviet ABM violation and the most serious breach since 1972.

"Before the ink was dry on the [1972] SALT I agreement, the Soviets began to test their surface-to-air missiles at altitudes around 100,000 feet," Mr. Jastrow said in a recent speech. "No airplane flies at 100,000 feet, but missiles do."

He said the ABM treaty forbids phased-array radars unless they are on the border and facing outward. Such radars are permitted by the treaty for "early warning, or not at all," he added.

The report on Krasnoyarsk rules out the possibility the radar is for

early warning of ballistic missiles. It says the new Soviet radar could have provided an additional six minutes advance notice of incoming missiles if it were on the northeastern border and within treaty restraints.

"This radar is far from Soviet borders and fairly close to a large field of Soviet ICBMs," Mr. Jastrow said. "Its function is unmistakable."

The diplomatic exchange between the Soviets and the U.S. delegation two years ago in Geneva reveals the difficulty in addressing treaty violations by the Soviet Union. In the case of the Krasnoyarsk radar, the Soviet side provided justifications that were easily knocked down by U.S. intelligence analysis.

In defending Soviet construction of the radar, the leader of the Soviet delegation, Mr. Starodubov, told U.S. diplomats Krasnoyarsk "had the specific mission of tracking objects in outer space." He claimed the radar will monitor flights and landings of manned Soviet spacecraft launched from Tyuratam and Plesetsk missile ranges east of Krasnoyarsk.

Mr. Starodubov, a negotiator at the Geneva arms talks, also said the Krasnoyarsk will also track space objects "for verification of compliance by the sides with their obligations in the use of outer space."

Mr. Jastrow said it was impossible for the Soviets to track space launches because the Soviet space center is hundreds of miles east of Krasnoyarsk and the turn of the earth would preclude accurate monitoring.

"The U.S. Commissioner [Gen. Ellis] rebutted the Soviet response by stating that the U.S. side's analysis of current Soviet space programs indicates that the orientation and location of this radar would not allow it to monitor the launches, insertions into orbit, or landing of current Soviet manned space systems," the report states.

The location and orientation of the Krasnoyarsk radar prevents it from improving existing radar coverage of space flights "even if they were launched with inclinations of up to 70 degrees," U.S. analysts concluded.

They also said a Soviet spacecraft, regardless of launch inclination, would enter orbit "several hundred kilometers" after it could be picked up by the Krasnoyarsk radar screen.

Based on these findings, the report states that U.S. Commissioner Ellis dismissed the Soviet explanation with the following points:

- The radar "has numerous physical similarities to other large

phased array radars in the U.S.S.R. that have been identified by the Soviet side as ballistic missile early warning radars."

- It "will have the inherent capability to track ballistic missiles in flight trajectory."

- It "is located to fill an obvious and significant gap in the coverage provided by Soviet radars for early warning of ballistic missile attack."

- It "will also have the inherent capability to perform ABM functions."

- The radar "could not monitor the insertion and landing phases of Soviet spacecraft launched from Soviet test ranges."

- It "will not be able to contribute in any meaningful way as national technical means of verification of U.S. compliance with ... the ABM treaty or ... any other agreement."

- The "U.S. side sees no practical application of this radar in future manned space programs."